

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5370

S E C R E T CAIRO 9757

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CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE US JR SA SY

SUBJECT: ASAD'S MESSAGE VIA HUSSEIN ABOUT SOVIET PRESSURE
ON SYRIA

REF: (A) STATE 177831, (B) CAIRO 9686

SUMMARY: FAHMY SCOFFED AT ASAD'S MESSAGE, THROUGH HUSSEIN, ABOUT SOVIET THREAT, WHICH HE NOTED HAD NOT STOPPED SYRAINS FROM ESCALATING FIGHTING IN LEBANON. SOVIETS HAD WARNED ASAD THAT NO MORE ARMS AND SPARE PARTS WOULD BE SENT IF HE CONTINUES USE THEM AGAINST MOSLEMS AND PALESTINIANS, BUT ASAD HAS ENOUGH TO CARRY ON. FAHMY MADE IMPASSIONED ATTACK ON HUSSEIN AND ADVISED THAT WE STOP ACCEPTING KING'S WORD. KHAMMASH HAD TOLD SAUDIS, BUT NOT EGYPTIANS, ABOUT ALLEGED SOVIET THREAT. INSTEAD, HE HAD CONVEYED HUSSEIN'S DESIRE FOR BETTER RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AND WISH TO VISIT EGYPT, BUT SADAT TURNED HIM DOWN. FAHMY SUGGESTED MURPHY BE INSTRUCTED TO SEE ASAD DIRECTLY AND ASK HIM FOR DETAILS OF ALLEGED SOVIET THREAT RATHER THAN WORK THROUGH HUSSEIN ON THIS MATTER. IF WE HAVE HARD INFORMATION, WE COULD DISCUSS IT WITH EGYPT IN ORDER TO COORDINATE POLICY.

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GOE NOT PREPARED TO "RUBBER STAMP" SYRIAN ACTIONS IN

LEBANON AND ALSO ADVISES US NOT TO DO SO. END SUMMARY

1. I MET WITH FAHMY, JULY 19, IN ALEXANDRIA. HE AHD
GOTTEN BACK FROM JIDDA EARLIER IN THE DAY, WAS
OBSIOUSLY TIRED, AND COULD NOT SEE ME UNTIL 1800 LOCAL.

2. ASKED IF HE HAD RECEIVED YOUR MESSAGE ABOUT ASAD'S
QUERY THROUGH HUSSEIN, FAHMY SAID HE HAD. HE PROFESSED
NOT TO HAVE UNDERSTOOD EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANTED AND TO
HAVE THEREFORE PREFERRED TO WAIT FOR MY EXPLANATION.
I WENT THROUGH YOUR ORAL MESSAGE AGAIN AND
EXPLAINED THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ASAD MESSAGES AS
WE UNDERSTOOD THEM. I INVITED HIS ATTENTION TO THE
FACT THAT OUR REPLY TO ASAD THROUGH HUSSEIN HAD ASKED
FOR MORE INFORMATION, BUT THAT YOU WOULD WELCOME THE
PRESIDENT'S AND HIS VIEWS ON HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND.

3. FAHMY WAS SCORNFUL ABOUT THE ASAD MESSAGE ON SOVIET
THREAT, NOTING SARCASTICALLY HE ASSUMED THAT IS WHY
THE SYRIANS HAVE AGAIN ESCALATED THE FIGHTING IN
LEBANON. THEY ARE NOW ATTACKING EVEN SMALL CITIES OF NO
MORE THAN 30,000. THE STORY OF THE SOVIET THREAT,
ACCORDING TO FAHMY, IS SIMPLE. ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO,
THE SOVIETS HAD SENT ASAD A STERN MESSAGE SAYING THEY
HAD NOT SUPPLIED ARMS TO SYRIA TO BE USED AGAINST
MOSLIMS AND PALESTINIANS. ASAD THEN SENT KHADDAM TO
MOSCOW TO EXPLAIN THE SYRIAN POSITION. ALTHOUGH FIVE
MEETINGS WERE HELD WITH SOVIET LEADERS, KHADDAM WAS
UNABLE TO PERSUADE THEM. SINCE KHADDAM'S RETURN, AND
BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE NOT EASED
THEIR MILITARY PRESSURE, THE SOVIETS HAVE SENT WORD TO
ASAD THAT THEY WILL SEND NO MORE ARMS OR SPARE
PARTS IF HE CONTINUES TO USE THESE AGAINST THE MOSLIMS
AND PALESTINIANS. BUT, FAHMY SCOFFED, ASAD IS NOT
HURTING. HE DOES NOT NEED MORE ARMS AND SPARE PARTS
AND HAS PLENTY. THAT IS EVIDENT FROM ASAD'S
ESCALATION IN LEBANON.

4. FAHMY THEN MADE AN IMPASSIONED ATTACK ON HUSSEIN.
THE KING HAD JUST BEEN TO MOSCOW, WHERE HE HAD BEEN
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OFFERED ARMS WORTH \$1 BILLION. HUSSEIN WAS WELL AWARE
THAT THE SAUDIS WOULD NOT FINANCE ANY SOVIET ARMS AND
NEVER INTENDED TO TAKE SOVIET ARMS. HUSSEIN, FAHMY
CHARGED, IS SIMPLY TRYING TO PLAY THE SOVIETS
AGAINST THE US AND SEEMS TO BE GETTING AWAY WITH IT.
HE THEN WENT THROUGH HIS PAST LITANY OF COMPLAINTS
THAT WE FAILED TO HEED HIS AND SADAT'S ENJOINDERS
OF THE PAST YEAR TO PRESS HUSSEIN TO STOP HIS FLIRTATION

WITH SYRIANS. HE WISHED STRONGLY TO ADVISE US AGAIN THAT WE SHOULD STOP ACCEPTING HUSSEIN'S WORD.

5. ASKED IF KHAMMASH HAD COME TO JIDDA TO BRIEF KING KHALID AND SADAT, FAHMY AFFIRMED KHAMMASH HAD BEEN TO JIDDA. HOWEVER, KHAMMASH DID NOT INFORM SADAT ABOUT ASAD'S MESSAGE. INSTEAD, HE SIMPLY CONVEYED HUSSEIN'S DESIRE FOR BETTER RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AND THE KING'S WISH TO VISIT EGYPT. SADAT HAD TURNED HIM DOWN. KHAMMASH DID TELL THE SAUDIS ABOUT ASAD'S MESSAGE AND THE SAUDIS IN TURN TOLD SADAT. SADAT ADVISED KHALID TO SUGGEST THAT HUSSEIN TELL THE SYRIANS "TO BEHAVE THEMSELVES A BIT BETTER." FAHMY CLAIMS THE SAUDIS PASSED ON THIS ADVICE.

6. AFTER CONSIDERABLE HISTORICS ABOUT OUR ALLEGED FAILURE TO DO ANYTHING MEANINGFUL ABOUT THE SOVIET THREAT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AS OPPOSED TO EGYPT'S STURDY OPPOSITION TO SOVIET ENCROACHMENT ON ALL FRONTS, FAHMY ASKED THAT I CONVEY THE FOLLOWING THREE POINTS IN REPLY TO YOUR QUERY:

(A) HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY, WHEN WE GET THIS KIND OF A STORY FROM HUSSEIN, WE DO NOT INSTRUCT AMB MURPHY TO SEE ASAD. MURPHY SHOULD INDICATE TO ASAD EXACTLY WHAT HUSSEIN IS SAYING AND ASK FOR A FIRST-HAND VERSION OF THE STORY. WHAT HAVE BEEN THE EXCHANGES WITH THE SOVIETS; HOW VULNERABLE DOES ASAD BELIEVE HE IS, WHAT IS THE TRUE SITUATION, AND WHAT ARE ASAD'S INTENTIONS. FAHMY DECRIED OUR CONSTANT ACCEPTANCE OF HUSSEIN AS A COMMUNICATION CHANNEL FROM ASAD AND NOTED THE US AMB IN DAMASCUS HAS A RIGHT TO ASK TO BE RECEIVED.

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(B) ONCE USG HAS SOME HARD INFORMATION -- NOT THE TYPE PEDDLED BY ASAD THROUGH HUSSEIN -- HE SUGGESTED WE DISCUSS IT WITH EGYPT AND "WE CAN COORDINATE TOGETHER."

(C) GOE IS NOT RPT NOT PREPARED TO "RUBBER STAMP" WHAT ASAD IS DOING IN LEBANON AND IT ALSO ADVISES US NOT TO DO SO.

7. SUGGEST THIS MESSAGE BE REPEATED TO AMMAN AND DAMASCUS.
EILTS

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